
**AL-HIKMAH JOURNAL OF
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES**



Volume 5 No. 1 December, 2019

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
AL-HIKMAH UNIVERSITY, ILORIN.

Published by

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.
Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria

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ISBN: 2682-5058

Printed by:

Al-Fitrah Computer Centre
07060452220

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Classical Arabic: A Critique of *Thumadir bint Amr's (Al-Khansa)* Poetry

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Abstract

Classical Arabic is taught in several institutions across the globe especially at the University level where Arabic is a course of study, besides studies of individual scholars and translations of their literary writing. The study is highly concentrated on both poetry and prose written by Arab male writers of classical period. The works of poetess in classical Arabic literature have been largely neglected especially that of Al-Khansa. Scholars and critics fail to realize the extent of their achievements and their abilities to face comparison with other poets in both classical and modern Arabic literature. This paper therefore, explores the balance and provides a conspectus of Thumadir bint Amr popularly known as Al-Khansa's poetical composition in a such a form as may prove helpful not only to Arabic scholars, but also to inform the readers of Arabic literature. Here in this paper, the expression classical poetry is taken to mean the poetry before the advent of Islam in Arabian Peninsula. This paper also introduces classical Arabic poetry preoccupation with people, whether individuals or groups, that is, tribe, party, sect or race. The life and works of selected poetess is also exhibited in the paper with analysis of the work in a classical form. The paper posits that the classical Arabic poetry composed by Thumadir bint

Amrhad showcased the significance of women in literary circle of the period.

Key words: Classical, Arabic, Women and Poetry

Introduction

Tumādir bint 'Amr, popularly known as *al-khansa*' is considered the most important Arab women poetess during the classical period of Arabic literature. As a poem composer, she has mastered Arabic poetry, both thematically and artistically. She has been a prolific writer before the commissioning of Islamic apostleship Muhammad bn Abdullah. In the field of Arabic literature especially classical poetry she is one of the few Arab poetesses known in most Arab peninsula and beyond. Both her *rith a* composed for her two brothers shall be examined in this paper. After the composition of *Al-Ritha*(Elegy), she became the most talked-about poetess in Arab literary circles. The creativity of *al-Khansa*' manifests itself in her approach both to language and to social and political issues. Her linguistic prowess reflects the Arab perspectives on women prose and poetry dilemmas. As *al-Mua' allaqa* tbecame popular in Classical Arabic writing, *Tumādir bint 'Amr*, brings new insight to the Arabian women struggle during her days and beyond.

Tumādir bint 'Amr, normally known by her nickname al-Khansā 'the snub-nosed', was a member of the Sharīd clan of the Banū Sulaym. The dates of her birthday and of her death are uncertain. If any credence is to be given to the story about Durayd wanting to marry her or to the rough dating of the death of her two brothers to 613 and 615, the date of her birth can hardly be put later than 590 and could well be more than a decade earlier. She is said to have lived on into the reign of the caliph Mu'āwiya, the latest date suggested for her death being 50/670. Such a late date seems very doubtful, and it is perhaps just one indication that many of the stories told about her are apocryphal or spurious. However, they provide an interesting background to her poetry, though perhaps more entertaining than she herself would have appreciated.

It is said that she had composed virtually no poetry before her full brother Mu'āwiya was killed in a clash with the Banū Murra. Thereupon she began to compose laments for him. A couple of years later her half-brother Sakr was killed in another clash with the Banu Murra. From then on she composed a steady stream of laments, the majority about Sakhr, most of the rest about Mu'āwiya, some about both, some about the two of them and their fathers. There is only an insignificant fraction of her poetry that is not lament (or concomitant calls for vengeance) in a *dīwān* that is quite extensive for so early a poet. Her obsession with lament was all-engulfing – unhinged does not seem too strong a description of her personality.

Her poems have virtually nothing to tell us about the rest of her life – one husband and one child being mentioned. However, the *akbār* tell us that she married three times; had at least four and possibly as many as seven children (at least one of whom was a poet: al-'Abbās b. Mirdās, see *al-Asma' iyyāt*, poem 70); went on a delegation of her tribe to meet Muhammad in 629 and became a convert, technically one of the *sahāba*; that some of her sons were killed at the battle of Qādisiyya, and so on. That may be so, but it is Sakhr that really counts, then Mu'āwiya, with their father a distant third, and apparently this was so for a period of at least forty years.

Some of al-Khansā's surviving laments are over thirty lines long, and these are much admired by Arab readers. However, they are typically, for most of her poems that survive are shorter pieces. I have therefore selected a reasonably short *qasīda* (at any rate a piece with *tarsi*) and a *qit'a* that seem to me to display the central characteristics of her laments.

The first poem chosen in this paper is one of her best-known laments for Sakhr. It is said by some to be the last poem composed by al-Khansā, but against that we have to balance a story concerning al-Khansā and 'Ā'isha, the Prophet's wife (or, rather from the context of the story, his widow 'Ā'isha's standing as an authority on Islam grew

with the passing of time). This would make the poem a relatively late one, composed well over twenty years after Sakhr's death, but not necessarily her last one. The story runs as follows:

Al-Khansā' went to Medina when she was making the pilgrimage and met 'Ā'isha there. She was wearing a black *sidār* made of hair, had her head shaven, and walking with a stick because of her advanced years. 'Ā'isha asked her, 'O *khunās*, why are you wearing a *sidar* when it has been prohibited in Islam?' Al-Khansā' replied, 'I was not aware of its prohibition'. Then 'Ā'isha said, 'What has brought you to the state I see you in?' 'The death of my brother Sakhr', al-Khansā' replied. 'In what ways was he so kind to you as to deserve this?' Asked 'Ā'isha. Al-Khansā' described the way he had treated her and been kind to her and looked after her, whereupon, 'Ā'isha said, 'Islam has destroyed all that you describe'. At this al-Khansā' began to recite *yudhakkiru-nītulū'u l-shamsi*. When she had finished, 'Ā'isha said, 'Only great kindness from his could have spurred you to compose that'.

As the poem was composed long after the death of Sakhr, the rawness of feeling that we find in the laments of the other women poets in this selection is tempered by the passing of time, and hence nostalgia looms large. Nevertheless, the emotional content is still strong and is in marked contrast with *Labīd's Rithā'*.

The poem falls into four main sections, in each of which the lines are closely linked: 1-3, 4-8, 10-14, 15-16. The only easily movable line is line 9, which is found in some recensions after line 14. This line, incidentally, shows how references to Allāh could creep in during the course of transmission even in cases where a pagan deity is not involved. One version of the line has *yā Skahru 'O Sakhr'*, and the other *wa-llāhi* 'by God'.

The Text

The poem is composed in the *wāfir* metre

يُورِقُنِي التَّذَكُّرُ حِينَ أَمْسِي فَأَصْبِحُ قَدْ بَلَّيْتُ بِفَرْطِ نَكْسِي

In the evening remembrance keeps me awake, and in the morning I am worn out by the overwhelming disaster [that has befallen us].

Arraqa means 'to keep awake', and *tadhakkur* is 'remembrance'. *Amsā* 'to enter on the time of evening' in encampments people go to sleep early and *asbaha* 'to enter on the time of morning' are used antithetically. The contrast is picked up again in lines 10 and 16. *Buliya* means to be worn out; *fart* is 'excess'; and *muks* is 'disaster'. There is a variant second hemistich, but is not clear exactly what the printed text should be: *wa-yarda 'u-nīma 'a/ 'ani l-ahzānimuks-ī/ nafs-ī*. The printed text seems to me to be far superior because it provides a natural link with later material.

عَلَى مَخْرٍ وَأَيْ فَنَّى كَمَخْرٍ لِيَوْمِ كَرِيهَةٍ وَطَعَانِ خَلَسِ

In the case of Sakhr, and what youth is there like Sakhr to deal with a day of warring and skilful spear-thrust?

As mentioned in the introduction, the meaning carries on from the previous line with 'alā linking directly back to *muks-ī*. *Ayyu* is used in a simple interrogative sense with *fatan* as its following genitive: 'what young man', *fatan* presumably meaning 'not a *shaykh*'. *Karīha* is 'war, adversity': *ti'ān* is the *masdar* of *tā'ana* 'to fight using a spear'; and *khals* is the *masdar* of *khalasa* 'to seize something when the opportunity occurs'. The combination of the two words seems to be developed from two rather more common phrases: *ikhtalsata 'natan* 'to seize the opportunity to wound with a spear thrust', and *ta'natankhalīsun* 'a thrust which one has been skilful enough to inflict'.

وَلِلْخَصْمِ الْأَلَدِّ إِذَا تَعَدَّى لِيَأْخُذَ حَقَّ مَظْلُومٍ بِقِنَسٍ

And to deal with tenacious opponents when they transgress, so that he can assert the right of someone on whom oppression has fallen?

Again the verse carries on directly from the previous verse, *lil-khasmi* being parallel to *li-ywmikarīthatin*. It seems likely that *khasm* is used in a collective sense, as it is in other, *Rithā'* in *Mua'allaqat*.

Ta'addā basically means 'to go beyond'. Because of phrases such as *ta'addā l-haqqā* 'to go beyond what is right', it developed the meaning of 'to act wrongfully'. *Aladdu* means 'tenacious, recalcitrant'. It has a feminine *laddā'u* and plural *ludd*, hence it is not an elative.

Mazlūm means 'oppressed', It seems likely that *qins* 'top of the head' is linked by the *bi-* to *mazlum*, in which case the phrase would have to mean 'someone on whose head oppression has fallen'; attempts to link *bi-* back to *ya'khudha* are fraught with difficulty.

فَلَمْ أَرِ مِثْلَهُ زُرْءًا لِجِنِّ وَأَلَمْ أَرِ مِثْلَهُ زُرْءًا لِإِنْسٍ

I have not seen his like in the extent of [the] disaster [caused by] his death, either among jinn or among men.

There are problems about the readings in this line, with *lam asma' bihiruz'an* occurring as a variant for *lam aramithal-huruz'an* in both hemistichs. We have already seen *sruz'*, 'great misfortune, disaster' in Durayd, *Rithā'* 'Abdallāh, line 4. It appears that al-Khansā' sometimes uses the word with added meaning 'disaster caused by the death of someone'.

Note that contrast between man and *jinn*. The very Arabic repetitions in the text of this line cannot easily be translated into English.

أَشَدَّ عَلَى صُرُوفِ الدَّهْرِ أَيَّدًا وَأَفْصَلَ فِي الْخُطُوبِ بِغَيْرِ لَبْسٍ

Truly strong against the vicissitudes of fortune and decisive in affairs, showing no confusion.

Ashadda in the first hemistich and *afsala* (v.l. *afdala*) in the second hemistich refer back to *mithla* in line 4, and thence to *lam ara*. So, too, does *akrama* at the beginning of line 6. All three elatives appear to have an intensive rather than a comparative or superlative meaning. *Suruf* is commonly used in the phrase *suruf al-dhari* 'the vicissitudes of Fortune'. For *ayd* there is a variant *ād*, both words mean 'strength'. *Afsal* means 'more decisive' (or 'very decisive'); and *khutūb* is the *Labs* means 'confusion'.

وَأَكْرَمَ عِنْدَ ضُرِّ النَّاسِ جَهْدًا لَجَادٍ أَوْ لِجَارٍ أَوْ لِعِيسٍ

At times when people were suffering hardship most generous in his endeavours towards those who sought help or towards neighbours or to his wife.

Durr is 'hardship' *Jahdan* is a *tamyiz* accusative qualifying *akrama*. *Jahd* is 'one's utmost endeavours', and *akramajahdan* means 'most generous in his endeavours'. *Jādinis* the active participle of *jadā*, *yajdū* 'to seek help, bounty'. *Irs* is 'wife'.

وَضَنَّيْفٍ طَارِقٍ أَوْ مُسْتَجِيرٍ يُرَوِّعُ قَلْبُهُ مِنْ كُلِّ جَرَسٍ

Many was the guest who arrived by night or the man who was seeking protection, [people] whose hearts were alarmed at every sound.

The *wa-* that begins the line is the *wāwrubba*. *Tāriqis* the active participle of *taraqa* 'to come by night'; and *istajāra* is 'to seek protection / *jiwār*'. The second hemistich is a *sifa* clause. It most clearly refers back to *mustajīr*, but the hemistich division makes the *sifa* fairly

general, and it thus colours *dayf* as well. *Rawwa'a* is 'to frighten', and *jars* is 'a slight sound'.

فَأَكْرَمَهُ وَأَمَّنَهُ فَأَمَّنَا عَلَى خَلِيئًا بِأَلِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ بُؤْسٍ

He treated [such people] kindly and made them safe, so that their state was free from every pressing need.

Āmana is 'to make safe' *Amsā* here means simply 'to become' Its subject is *bāl*, a synonyms of *hāl* 'state, condition'. *Khaliyy* is 'free of' *Bu's* is distress, pressing need, destitution'

فَلَا يَا صَخْرُ لَا أَنْسَاكَ حَتَّى أَفَارِقَ مُهَجَّتِي وَيُشَقَّ رَمْسِي

Ah, O Sakhr, I shall [never] forget you until I part from my soul and my grave is cut.

Fāraqa is 'to separate oneself from, to abandon', *Muhjah* originally meant 'blood', then 'the blood of the heart', and then 'soul'. *Shaqqa* is 'to cut'; and *rams* is 'a grave (that is level with the ground)'

يُذَكِّرُنِي طُلُوعَ الشَّمْسِ صَخْرًا وَأَذْكَرُهُ لِكُلِّ غُرُوبِ شَمْسٍ

The rising of the sun reminds me of Sakhr, and I remember him every time the sun sets.

Tulū' and *ghurūb* pick up, in reverse order, the verbs *umsī* and *msbihu* in line 1. Note the double accusative after *dhakkara*.

فَلَوْلَا كَثْرَةُ الْبَاكِينَ حَوْلِي عَلَى إِخْوَانِهِمْ لَقَتَلْتُ نَفْسِي

But for the multitude of people around me weeping for their kin I would have killed myself.

For the construction used with *law lā*, *al-Bākīna* is used to denote both men and women. Here *bakā* takes 'alā to 'to weep for'. For *bakā* with the same meaning but followed by then accusative, *Ikhwān* clearly means 'brothers', but it is also being used with a more general meaning 'men folk'.

وَلَكِنْ لَأَزَالُ أَرَى عَجُولاً وَنَائِحَةً تُنُوحُ لِيَوْمِ نَحْسٍ

All the time I can see the woman grieving for her dead child and the woman wailing over the death of her husband on a day of misfortune.

Lāazāluarā appears to have a much generalized meaning 'I can always see'. '*Ajūl* here means 'a woman who is grieving for her dead child'. *Nā'iha*, the feminine active participle from *nāha*, *yamūhu*, means 'a woman wailing in mourning' (particularly for a dead husband).

On *nahs*, 'misfortune, distress' cf. *al-Shanfarā*, *Lāmiyat al-'Arab*, line 54. Though the line refers to two individuals, they are clearly thought of as representatives of two classes of bereaved women.

هُمَا كَانَتَاهُمَا تَبْكِي أَخَاهَا عَشِيَّةَ رُزْنِهِ أَوْ غِبَّ أَمْسٍ

Both of them weep for their [lost ones] in the evening of the day disaster befell them or after that.

Kiltā is the feminine of *kilā*, when we get to the verb *tabkī*, it is clear that *humākiltā-humā* is being treated as if it were *kulluwāhidatin min-humā*. This allows *-hā* to be used as the suffix after *akhā*. Note that in this line *bakā*, 'to weep over', takes an accusative (*akhā-hā*),

'*Ashiyya* is 'evening'; on *ruz* '*Ghibbaamsi* is a strange and difficult phrase. The logic of the line appears to require that *ghibbaamsi* refers to

a period after 'ashiyataruz'i-hi. It seems impossible to coax this out of the most obvious meanings of *ghibba* 'after' and *amsi* 'the previous day, yesterday'. I think that the problem lies with *amsi*, which is clearly being used for necessity because of the rhyme. Despite the unanimous views of the dictionaries about the very limited meaning of *amsi*, I suspect that it has the meaning of *masā*'. Given the link between *ghadā/ghudwa* and *ghad*, I do not think it unreasonable to suggest that there could well have been a similar one between *amsā/masā*' and *amsi*. The fact that the latter has to all intents and purposes disappeared does not mean that it could not and did not exist.

The alternative is to treat *ghibb* as meaning 'a period of two days'. This would allow us to treat *ghibbamsi* as 'two days on from the previous day', i.e. 'the day after'. This seems to me to be the sort of explanation in which the medieval commentators revealed but which we should now hesitate to put forward.

Like *ikhwānakh* appears to mean not only 'brother' but also 'other blood relative', because an 'ajūl does not weep for her brother but for her child.

وَمَا يَبْكِينَ مِثْلَ أُخِي وَأَكِينِ أَسْأَى النَّفْسَ عَنْهُ بِالنَّاسِي

Yet then are not weeping for the like for my brother but, I console myself with the example of those who bear grief patiently.

The *mithl* here brings an echo of the use of the word in each hemistich *Salla* means 'to console, divert'; and *ta'assā* is 'to console oneself by the example of others who have borne grief patiently'.

فَقَدْ وَدَّعْتُ يَوْمَ فِرَاقِ صِخْرِ أَبِي حَسَّانَ لَدَاتِي وَأَنْسِي

On the day that I parted from Abū Hassān Sakhr I said farewell to my pleasures and my cheer.

For the use of *wadda* 'a, the objects of the verb are *ladhdhāt-ī wa-uns-ī*. The phrase *yawmafīrāqi Sakhrin* is an accusative of time. al-Khanasā' uses Sakhr's *kunya* Abū Hassān from time to time. It appears to be something of a line-filler. *Uns* means 'sociableness, sociability, cheerfulness'.

فَيَا لَهْفِي عَائِيهِ وَلَهْفَ أُمِّي أَيُنْبِجُ فِي الضَّرِيحِ وَفِيهِ يُمْسِي

Alas for my sorrow for his; alas for the sorrow of my mother! Does he [really] spend the morning in the grave and spend the evening in it?

Lhaf, 'grief, sorrow', is commonly used in exclamatory phrases in *marāthī*, 'alas for the grief of my mother' (an ordinary vocative with an *idāfa*), should convey the fact that Sakhr's mother (and al-Khanasā's mother – they were uterine brother and sister) was alive when he was killed. However, it does not mean that she was alive when the poem was composed. *Darīh* is 'a grave'.

Note that the verbs in the line 1 recur in the final hemistich.

Furthermore, this little piece is a simple lament for al-Khanasā's full brother Mu'āwīya. It is, no doubt, unfair to al-Khanasā' to point out that it was much easier for her to mention the name Sakhr in her poems than it was for her to use the metrically difficult form Mū'awīyātū. The latter can of course be used if it is followed by a qualifying phrase (e.g. *fa-bkī Mu'āwiyata l-fatā* in a piece the *kāmil* metre), but that is not an easy option. Here the difficulty is avoided in another way. The perusal form *Mu'āwīyah* is used in the rhyme position. For another perusal form see the line quoted in the second paragraph below. Such perusal forms are, however, exceptional.

Any detailed study of a poet who is classed as a *mukhadrim* is bound to examine the extent to which the poet's conversion to Islam shows up in his (or her) poetry. It is impossible to say much about this question here, though it is reasonable to suggest that by and large the conversation of poetic tradition dominates, even with such poems as the famous panegyric on Muhammad by *Ka'bb. Zuhayr, Bānat Su'ād*.

Brief phrases referring to Allah were not uncommon in early poetry though their incidence has almost certainly been increased by modifications to the texts during the course of oral transmission – but the first sign of Islam in poetry is an increase in the use of such phrases. Given the traditional picture of al-Khansā' clinging to old ways after her conversion, as exemplified in the story of her meeting with 'Ā'isha, we might expect to see very little of the new religion emerging in her poetry. Also much of it must have been composed before she became a Muslim. It is therefore particularly interesting to find *māda'allāhadā'iyah* as the final phrase of this poem. That surely shows the influence of Islam, as do such lines as:

Fa-lāyub'idannallāhu Sakhranwa-'ahda-hu
Wa-lāyub'idannallāhur abbī Mu'āwiya

Pieces like this cannot have been composed until getting on for twenty years after Mu'āwiya's death at the earliest.

On the other hand, I feel that the use of *zabāniya* in line 5 probably has no direct connection with the phrase *sa-nad'u l-zabāniyah* in Qur'rān, Sūrah 96, verse 18, even though the Quranic verse must have been in existence at least fifteen years before al-Khansā' became a convert, and one must infer from the last phrase of the poem, *māda'allāhadā'iyah*, that the piece could not have been composed before her conversion. It seems that the Qur'ān and al-Khansā' are both drawing on the high level lexicon of the period to put across nations

about what we may call demons. Similar examples of the use of the high level lexicon are not hard to find. One must suffice here. There are a couple of lines in which al-Khansā' uses the phrase *dhūmirra*. There appears to be no reason to believe that she is borrowing directly from Qur'ān, Sura 53, verse 6 (also on early verse).

The Text

In addition to the versions in the *Diwān* of al-Khansā', the poem is also to be found in the section of the *Aghāni* devoted to al-Khansā'. There are one or two minor variants, but these do not call for special notice. The article is basically followed the text in Allan Jone's edition.

Metre

The piece is in the *tawil* metre. Although is it a metre that *al-Khansā'* uses commonly, it is not the overwhelming favourite that it is with most poets. Allan Jone's edition of the *Diwān* contains more poems *basit* than in *tawil* verses

In the piece al-Khansā' confines herself to praise of *Mu'āwiya's* martial prowess (verses 1-5). She then turns rather abruptly in verse 6 to the transience of human life, and then rounds off the piece in verse 7 with a promise to lament for him as long as she lives. One might have expected some of *Mu'āwiya's* other virtues to be praised – that would certainly have happened with a longer piece. Perhaps the most unusual feature is the holding back of any mention of weeping to the last line. Women poets, and *al-Khansā'* above all, normally lard their poems with references to weeping. Janub and the unknown woman are notable exceptions to that.

أَلَا لَأَرَى فِي النَّاسِ مِثْلَ مُعَاوِيَةَ إِذَا طَرَقَتْ إِخْدَى اللَّيَالِي بِدَاهِيَةَ

Indeed, I do not see among the people the like of Mu'āwiya, when a night brings with it some misfortune.

For *a-lā* 'indeed' see Wright 2, 310; cf. *al-Shanfarā, Qasida, Tā'iyya, laylatun mina l-layāli*. The verb *taraqa* 'to come by night' here

is linked to *dāhiya* 'misfortune, disaster' by *bi-*, i.e. we have not same construction as is found with *atā bi-*, etc.

بِدَاهِيَةٍ يُضْغِي الْكِلَابَ حَسِيْسُهَا وَتَخْرُجُ مِنْ سِرِّ النَّجِيِّ عَلَانِيَةً

Some terrible activity, the slight noise of which causes the dogs to whine, and open fact emerges from the secret of men acting together.

The repetition of *bi-dāhiyatīn* is perhaps more reminiscent of the repetitions in *Ta'abbata Sharrā's Qasida, Qāfiyya* than those in *Janub's Rithā'*. It is followed by a *sifa* clause. The hemistich recalls the picture of the dogs being roused by extraneous noise in *Lāmiyyat al-'Arab*, line 58, where a night attack is also being described. *Adghais* 'to cause to howl or whine'; and *hasis* here means 'a slight noise'.

Najīyy is glossed as *al-rijālalladhinayatanājawna*. This seems to me to be on the right lines, though I feel that *yatanājawna* requires a strong translation 'who act together in secret', i.e. 'carry out a secret attack'. *Alāniya* is the opposite of *sir*, and here it means 'open fact'.

أَلَا لَا أَرَى كَالْفَارِسِ الْجَوْنِ فَارِسًا إِذَا مَا عَاتَتْهُ جُرْأَةٌ وَعَلَانِيَةً

Indeed, I do not see a knight like the white knight when he was boosted by daring and ardour.

Here the repetition of the beginning of line 1 is more reminiscent of *Janub* than *Ta'abbata Sharrā*. It is natural for *al-Khansā* to refer to *Mu'āwiya* as an *fāris* 'knight, horseman', as he was the leader of the tribe.

Jawn is a word that usually gives difficulty, as it is one of the *addād*, 'words with opposite meanings', in this case 'black' and 'white'. It is suggested that here *jawn* means 'white' and that the significance is

'of sterling character'. That is a plausible explanation, though whether it was what was originally intended is another matter.

'*Alā* here has the meaning 'to spread over'. *Fur'a* means 'daring, boldness'. *Ghalāniyah* is another lightened, perusal form (for *ghalāniyya*). The word is apparently derived from *ghalā, yaghlu* 'to go to extremes'. Its meaning seems to be 'zeal, ardour'.

وَكَاَنَّ لِزَّازِ الْحَرْبِ عِنْدَ شُبُوبِهَا إِذَا شَمَّرَتْ عَنْ سَاقِهَا وَهِيَ دَاكِيَةٌ

He was one who stuck fast to War when it was kindled when it bared its leg and blazed fiercely.

Lizāz seems originally to have been a *masdar* meaning 'cleaving to', but it came to be used adjectivally, often qualified by *khasm*. *Shubub* is the *masdar* of *shabba* 'to be kindled', a word often used of war. For *shammara* 'to tuck up one's garments' For the baring of the legs prior to fighting, see *al-Shanfarā, QasidaTā'iyya*, line 23 and *Durayd, Rithā' AbdAllāh*,. *Dhakā* is 'to blaze fiercely'.

The personification of war, as might be expected, was very common, even without recourse to phrases such as Umm Qastal Metaphor, as has already been noted, is a good deal less common than simile in early poetry. It is much rarer still to find mixed metaphor of the kind we see in this line. It is suspected that its occurrence here is due to a habit that al-Khansā' sometimes has of giving rapid series of images rather than sketching a cameo. The next line seems to me to show this tendency in a slightly different way.

وَقَوَادِ خَيْلٍ نَحْوِ الْخُرَى كَأَنَّهَا سَعَالٍ وَعَقْبَانٍ عَلَيْهَا زَبَانِيَةٌ

[He was] the leader of horses against others [of the enemy]; it was a though they were she-ghūls and swift bringers of destruction, with attendant jinn riding them.

Qawwād is one of the intensive forms that *al-Khansa*' is fond of using when describing her brothers as leaders of the tribe. It means 'leader'. *Ukhrā*, implying 'the horses of the enemy' is used because *khayl* is feminine.

The simile that follow is complicated. There are various lines in early poetry in which horses are compared to *sa'ālin* or are said to be ridden by *jinn*; and in line 12 of poem 6 in the *Mufaddaliyyāt* there is a verb, referring to a wild-ass, as '*ala* 'to turn into a *si'lāt*'. *Si'lāt*, plural *sa'ālin*, mean 'a she jinn' or 'she-ghul'; and *zabāniya* is plural with no genuine singular, meaning 'rebellious jinn' or 'attendant jinn' or 'attendants'. The oddity lies with '*iqbān*, which is the plural of '*uqāb* 'an eagle'. It would seem that the force of '*iqbān* is 'swift bringers of destruction', but it does not sit well between *sa'ālin* and *zabāniya*. The *-hā* in '*alay-hā* appears to refer to *khayl*, but it could refer to '*iqbān* or perhaps even to both.

بَلِينَا وَمَا تَبْلَى تَعَارٌ وَمَا تُرَى عَلَى حَدَثِ الْأَيَّامِ إِلَّا كَمَا هِيَ

We wither and perish; not so *Ti'ār* – it will be seen only as it is now, despite all the accidents of time.

Balināwa-mātablā: this phrase is identical with that of the beginning of *Labid's Rithā' Arbad*, and the sentiment is the same, though the object of comparison is not. *Ti'ār* is said to be a place in the territory of the Banū Sulaym, though there is no agreement about what sort of place: *jabal* (mountain), *hadba* (isolated hill) and *jazra* (sheet of water) are all suggested.

Hadath al-ayyām is used, almost certainly for metrical reasons, for the much more common *hawādith al-dah* 'the accidents of time'. *Kamāhiyah* is clearly intended to mean *lātataghayyaru*, *hiyah* being a perusal form for *hiya*.

فَأُقْسِمْتُ لَا يَنْفَكُ دَمْعِي وَعَوْلَتِي
عَلَيْكَ بِحُزْنٍ مَا دَعَا اللَّهُ دَاعِيَهُ

I swear: my tears and lamentation in sadness for you will not ceases as long as a suppliant woman can pray to God.

For *aqsamtu* 'I swear', the verb here is followed by direct speech without any introductory particle. *Mānfakka* means 'not to cease'; *dam* is a collective meaning 'tears'; and *'awla* is 'wailing, lamentation'. As it stands, *bi-huznin* has to mean 'in sorrow'; there is a variant *bi-hazmin* 'on a piece of rugged (or high) ground'.

Māis the *ma l- daymumiyya* 'as long as'. It is followed by the perfect in Arabic, but in English the tense has to be varied according to the circumstances. Here a potential force is indicated.

Dā'iyah, a pausal form of *dā'iyatun*, is the feminine active participle of *da'ā* and means 'a woman who prays'. This would refer in a natural way to al-Khansā' herself – the masculine verb is no barrier to that. However, it is also possible to take *dā'iyah* as a masculine intensive form. That would be more strongly Islamic, and on that basis is somewhat more doubtful.

Conclusion

As far as the history of the poetry in Arabic can be traced, it is certain that Tumadir bint 'Amr is one of pioneers in the field. She established herself in this genre of Arabic literature, weaving words into works of art, just as she used to weave silk into carpets. Tumadir bint 'Amr's works then entered the twenty-first century as leaders in the art of poetry writing.

This literary genre, in fact, has matured along with women. Throughout the twentieth century, the work of Arab women poetess has reflected Arab social and political concerns, and they have given expression in their writings to all kinds of issues that matter in their societies. Therefore, to accuse Arab women of not being engaged in literary concerns and of confining themselves to personal issues is unfair. One only has to read poems to gain an insight into the history, the battles, and the future inclinations of the Arab nation. Moreover, many Arab women poetess are now achieving the high status with the Arabic literary world that their writings merit. The paper has described the work of old generation of Arab women poetess who had paved way for the modern poetesses in the Arab world.

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